

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: MUSIC HALL OR CANCER WARD?

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TO SEE AND HEAR THE SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS (STUC) IN ACTION IN THE ABERDEEN MUSIC HALL LAST WEEK WAS TO BELIEVE THE CABINET MINISTER WHO TOLD ME THAT THE STUC WAS "RUN BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY." INDEED, IT WAS LARGELY DRIVEL AND OFFAL, BUT IT PACKED PUNCH. FOR EXAMPLE,

A) THERE WAS HEAVIEST APPLAUSE FOR COMMUNIST MICK MCGAHEY, A PROFESSIONAL SPELL-BINDER, AS HE LABELED THE SOCIAL CONTRACT A UNILATERAL WAGE-FREEZE AGAINST THE POOR AND CALLED FOR WORKERS OF THE SCOTTISH WORLD TO UNITE FOR CONTINUED WAGE INCREASES TO OFFSET THE HEALEY BUDGET. IT'S "US" AND "THEM" WAS HIS CRY. HIS MOTION TO NATIONALIZE ALL OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, AS WERE VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER MOTIONS, WITHOUT DISSENT OR DISCUSSION.

B) COMRADE ALEX KITSON ET AL DEMANDED THAT NORTH SEA PRODUCTION BE REDUCED (SIC) IN FAVOR OF COAL, THAT IT BE HOARDED AS IN THE US

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(SIC) AND THAT MULTINATIONALS (ONLY AMERICAN CORPORATIONS WERE

SPECIFICALLY NAMED) BE NATIONALIZED. ALL MOTIONS WERE CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, WITHOUT DISSENT OR DISCUSSION.

C) LEFT-WING EMPLOYMENT MINISTER FOOT WAS THE MOST CONSERVATIVE AND UNCOMFORTABLE SPEAKER OF THE DAY AS HE EXPLAINED RATHER BRILLIANTLY TO A SULLEN HALL THE STARK ECONOMIC FACTS OF INFLATED BRITISH LIFE. THE ONLY BURST OF APPLAUSE CAME WHEN HE DUBBED JUNE 5 "INDEPENDENCE DAY" FOR BRITAIN AND PLUNGED HIS FORENSIC KNIFE INTO THE HEART OF HIS LEADER'S EC POLICY.

D) SPEAKERS ROUTINELY USED THE EXPRESSION "COMRADE CHAIRMAN, COMRADES", AS WELL THEY MIGHT. FRATERNAL DELEGATES FROM AS FAR BEHIND THE CURTAIN AS ULAN BATOR AND HANOI WERE CONSPICUOUS PARTICIPANTS. ON ARRIVAL WHEN ASKED FOR A DONATION FOR VICTIMS OF WAR IN VIETNAM, I NAIVELY ASKED "WHICH SIDE"? AND WAS TOLD, "DON'T BE DAFT" AND "IT'S ALL ONE NOW". I DEFERRED ATTENDANCE AT THE BRIEFING SESSION BY THE HANOI MEDICAL TEAM.

E) OVER DRINKS I ASKED THE NEW STUC GENERAL SECRETARY, COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER JIM MILNE, WHOSE APOLOGISTS CLAIM IS "AN EFFICIENT EXECUTIVE, BETTER ABOVE THAN BELOW GROUND, WHO WILL NOT IMPOSE HIS PRINCIPLES ON THE COUNCIL", IN WHAT WAYS DID THE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUC AND CP DIFFER? HE RESPONDED UNCOMFORTABLY THAT IT WAS A QUESTION OF SCOPE. A RANKING LABOUR OFFICIAL SAID, "NONE".

F) DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SCOTTISH TUC AND SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY QUICKLY AND CLEARLY EMERGED ON SUCH MAJOR ISSUES AS THE SOCIAL CONTRACT, EC MEMBERSHIP, AND SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY. WHEREAS THE LABOUR PARTY CONGRESS IN ABERDEEN FOUR WEEKS AGO WAS DEMONSTRABLY DIVIDED ON THE THREE ISSUES, THE STUC REACTED OVERWHELMINGLY AGAINST WAGE RESTRAINT AND COMMON MARKET MEMBERSHIP AND IN FAVOR OF A STRONG NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WITH TAX POWERS. TO AN EXTENT THESE DIFFERENCES COULD REFLECT A LACK OF DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURE AT THE STUC CONGRESS, PLUS A NEED TO CHALLENGE THE NATIONALISTS IN SCOTLAND. ON THIS LATTER POINT MY LABOUR SOURCE PARA E ASSERTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS WERE INFILTRATING THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THAT THE TWO PARTIES WERE POLITICAL BEDFELLOWS SEEKING A DISUNITED BRITISH KINGDOM. TO ME IT WAS MORE LIKE OBSERVING A CLASSIC STRUGGLE OF SOCIALISM, NATIONALISM AND CAPITALISM ON THE PROSPEROUS EAST COAST OF UNCLASSIFIED

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SCOTLAND, WITH A COMMUNIST IN THE WOODPILE.

G) LASTLY, THE ATTACKS ON AMERICAN MULTINATIONALS WERE NOT TOO DISSIMILAR FROM RECENT SENATE HEARINGS, UN DEBATES AND FOLK SINGERS AT CONCORD BICENTENNIAL, EXCEPT PERHAPS THAT COMRADE BILL NIVEN COINED A NEW HEADLINE FOR AMERICAN MCN'S AS "YANKEE DOODLE FRANKENSTEINS". I SUBSEQUENTLY ASKED SEVERAL OF THE RANK AND FILE IF AMERICAN CORPORATIONS WOULD THEREFORE BE WELL ADVISED

TO REDUCE THEIR INVESTMENTS AND INVOLVEMENT IN SCOTLAND, DESPITE
THEIR SUBSTANTIVE ROLE IN CREATING JOBS AND WEALTH HERE,
PARTICULARLY FROM THE NORTH SEA? THE USUAL RESPONSE WAS SURPRISE
THAT ANYONE SHOULD TAKE THIS "ANNUAL RITUAL" SERIOUSLY I
WONDER? IT WAS AT LEAST REASSURING TO ESCAPE OUT INTO THE
FRESH, CRISP, ABERDONIAN AIR ON UNION STREET, TEEMING WITH
"UNDOUR" SCOTS AND BABY CARRIAGES, NEW CARS BUMPER-TO-BUMPER
WITH ARTICULATED DIESEL TRUCKS, AND A HARBOR FRONT SWARMING
WITH SUPPLY SHIPS, NEWLY PAINTED WAREHOUSES AND GIANT CRANES
WORKING AWAY AT SIX PM IN AN OBVIOUS BOOMTOWN, APPARENTLY
OBLIVIOUS FOR THE TIME BEING TO THE STUC CACOPHONY IN THE
SO-CALLED "MUSIC HALL".

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